

March 28, 2016

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

We commend the recent Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposal to improve access to broadband for low-income Americans by modernizing the Lifeline program. One of four Universal Service programs, Lifeline was established in 1984 during the Reagan administration to provide support for landline telephone service to low-income families. The program was later updated under President George W. Bush to cover cell phone service. We applaud the Commission for its extensive work to ensure the integrity of this program and tamp down on waste, fraud, and abuse. Now, the time has come to update this program to ensure it keeps pace with the most ubiquitous form of modern communication.

As you know, access to broadband is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. Improving access to broadband, particularly for those with limited financial means, is an important national goal; and leveraging the existing Lifeline program will undoubtedly have a major impact on closing the digital divide for thousands of Americans in our states and across the country. The current proposal is an important step forward and we look forward to the FCC's vote later this month.

The need for more affordable broadband access cannot be overstated. Today, one in three U.S. adults lacks broadband at home, while one in five has neither a home connection nor a smartphone. Yet 80 percent of students report they require the Internet to do their homework and 90 percent of job applications have gone online. We have seen reports from across the country of lower-income students who fall into this so-called "homework gap," huddling outside their public libraries in the evening hoping to pick up a free Wi-Fi signal to complete their homework. As a country, we must do better.

The Lifeline proposal will make critical strides in improving accessibility for these individuals. The proposal preserves consumer choice and sets minimum service levels on supported services, to ensure low-income Americans have access to and can afford voice and broadband services.

We recognize the Commission is still finalizing the details of the modernization proposal. Please take care to ensure that any proposal to decrease over time the support for mobile "voice only" options currently covered by Lifeline undergoes careful review and considers the ongoing affordability of the service, including for those consumers that currently receive the service at no cost. Diminishing support for voice-only offerings may have unintended consequences for vulnerable communities who still rely on such services. We understand that the proposed order includes a requirement that the FCC conduct a thorough review of the Lifeline market during the transition period and trust this further data will be analyzed prior to any final changes to mobile voice support. We welcome news of that review process.

We also recognize that the Commission continues to gather input on potential minimum service standards and other broadband provider eligibility requirements. We trust that the Commission will strike a balance on these questions, striving not only to promote customer choice among new and existing Lifeline

providers, but also to ensure the availability and reliability of such services, including the availability of no-cost-to-consumer options.

Broadband access enables social and economic mobility, and provides expanded opportunities for those who have every desire to work hard and succeed but otherwise lack the information resources to compete. Thank you again for your efforts to advance access to modern communications for all Americans by modernizing the Lifeline program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A stylized blue ink signature of Cory A. Booker, featuring a large, sweeping 'C' and 'B'.

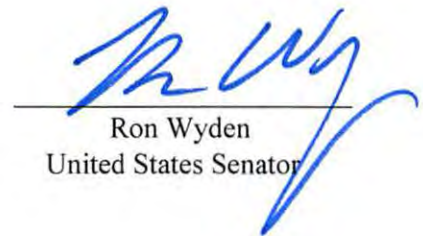
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

A blue ink signature of Christopher S. Murphy, with a prominent 'C' and 'M'.

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

A blue ink signature of Charles E. Schumer, written in a cursive style.

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A blue ink signature of Ron Wyden, featuring a large 'R' and 'W'.

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A blue ink signature of Edward J. Markey, with a large 'E' and 'M'.

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A blue ink signature of Richard Blumenthal, written in a cursive style.

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United States Senator

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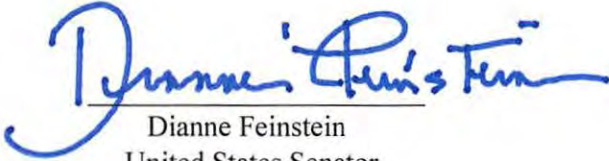
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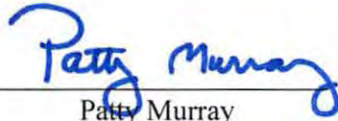
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

CC: Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai, O'Rielly



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

The Lifeline Modernization Order we recently adopted takes the next major step in fostering the Commission's commitment to universal service. The Order modernizes the program to support broadband and refocuses it to meet the 21st century's communications challenges. By dramatically improving Lifeline's management and design, and putting the program on sound fiscal footing moving forward, we will help low-income Americans all across our nation connect to the Internet and the opportunities of the broadband revolution. At the same time, the Order puts in place a number of key programmatic reforms designed to protect the integrity of the Lifeline program and build on the Commission's recent efforts to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the program.

For the first time, qualifying low-income consumers will be allowed to apply Lifeline support to broadband service. Specifically, qualifying consumers may apply the \$9.25 per month support to stand-alone mobile or fixed broadband service as well as bundled voice and data service packages. We also ensure that low-income consumers are not relegated to second class service and have choices that allow them to get the most value for the subsidy. The Order sets minimum service standards to ensure supported services meet modern needs. These benchmarks will be phased in over time to avoid undue disruption for existing Lifeline providers and consumers.

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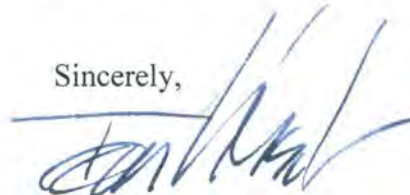
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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

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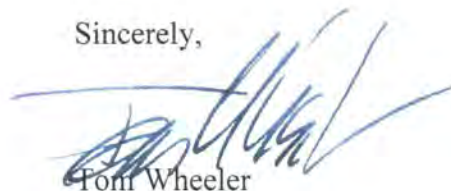
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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Cory Booker
United States Senate
359 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Booker:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

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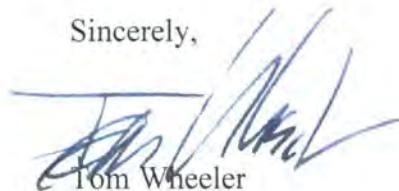
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
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May 12, 2016

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

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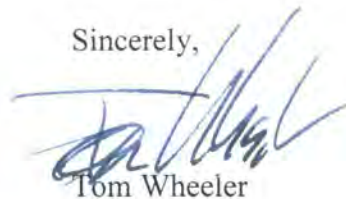
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
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May 12, 2016

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Brown:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

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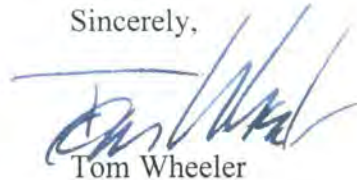
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

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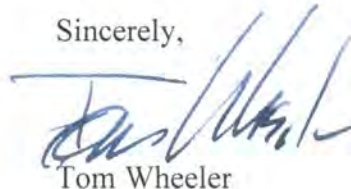
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May 12, 2016

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

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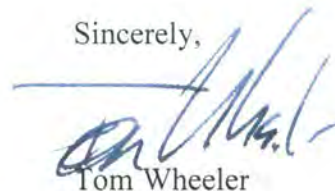
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The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
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I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

The Lifeline Modernization Order we recently adopted takes the next major step in fostering the Commission's commitment to universal service. The Order modernizes the program to support broadband and refocuses it to meet the 21st century's communications challenges. By dramatically improving Lifeline's management and design, and putting the program on sound fiscal footing moving forward, we will help low-income Americans all across our nation connect to the Internet and the opportunities of the broadband revolution. At the same time, the Order puts in place a number of key programmatic reforms designed to protect the integrity of the Lifeline program and build on the Commission's recent efforts to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the program.

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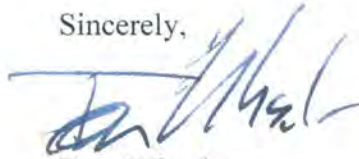
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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hirono:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

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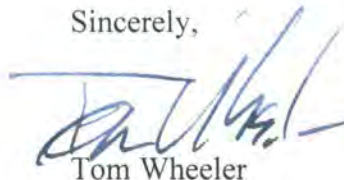
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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Senate
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

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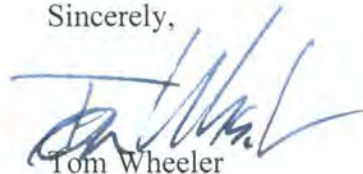
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senate
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murphy:

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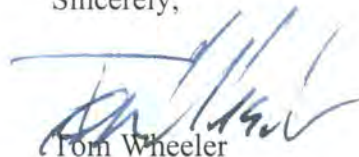
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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Gary Peters
United States Senate
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Peters:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

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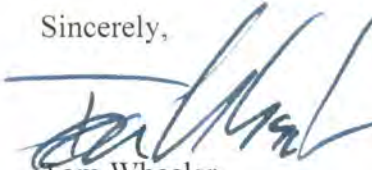
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

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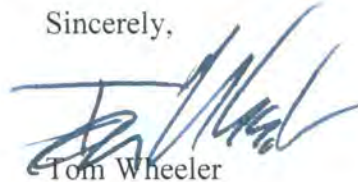
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

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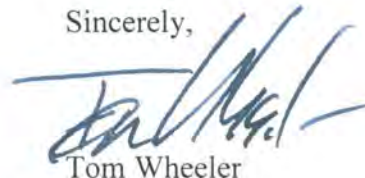
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

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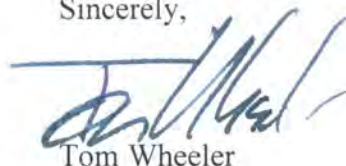
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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

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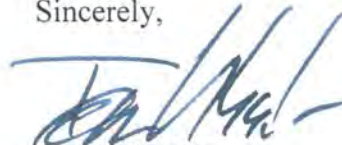
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The Order builds on earlier reforms that cracked down on waste, fraud, and abuse and weeded out over a billion dollars in payments to ineligible recipients. Most importantly, it establishes a National Eligibility Verifier as neutral third-party entity that removes the opportunity for providers to intentionally enroll ineligible subscribers. The Order also refines the list of federal programs that may be used to validate Lifeline eligibility to those that support electronic validation, are most accountable, and best identify people needing support. The Order also increases transparency by making program data publicly available and understandable, including subscriber counts by provider.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become a necessity. Broadband is necessary to connect individuals to employment opportunities, to complete an education, and to access important services online. At a time when our economy and lives are increasingly moving online, Lifeline must do the same. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21st century is key to the future of this vital program.

The Lifeline Modernization Order we recently adopted takes the next major step in fostering the Commission's commitment to universal service. The Order modernizes the program to support broadband and refocuses it to meet the 21st century's communications challenges. By dramatically improving Lifeline's management and design, and putting the program on sound fiscal footing moving forward, we will help low-income Americans all across our nation connect to the Internet and the opportunities of the broadband revolution. At the same time, the Order puts in place a number of key programmatic reforms designed to protect the integrity of the Lifeline program and build on the Commission's recent efforts to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the program.

For the first time, qualifying low-income consumers will be allowed to apply Lifeline support to broadband service. Specifically, qualifying consumers may apply the \$9.25 per month support to stand-alone mobile or fixed broadband service as well as bundled voice and data service packages. We also ensure that low-income consumers are not relegated to second class service and have choices that allow them to get the most value for the subsidy. The Order sets minimum service standards to ensure supported services meet modern needs. These benchmarks will be phased in over time to avoid undue disruption for existing Lifeline providers and consumers.

The Commission also retained long-term support for voice service as part of voice and data bundles. The Order anticipates technological advances in the convergence of voice and data. As a result, the Commission set a 5 and one half year transition during which we will

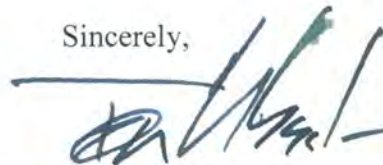
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a horizontal line drawn above it.

Tom Wheeler